

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Names:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Department Of Commerce); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department Of The Interior)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program Cooperative Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDTE) Facility
- **Announcement Type:** Initial announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** OAR-SG-2007-2000772
- **Statutory Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.; 33 U.S.C. 1121-1131.
- **Catalog of Federal Assistance Number:** 11.417, Sea Grant Support; 15.FFA, Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance.
- **Dates:** Preliminary proposals must be received by the National Sea Grant Office by 5 p.m. EDT on Thursday, September 14, 2006. Final proposals must be received by 5 p.m. EST on Tuesday, December 19, 2007. Only those who submit preliminary proposals meeting the preliminary proposal deadline and other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit final proposals.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program supports projects to develop, test, and demonstrate technologies that treat ships' ballast water in order to reduce the threat of introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water. THIS FFO IS ONLY FOR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TESTING AND EVALUATION (RDTE) FACILITY. THERE IS A SEPARATE FFO FOR THE TREATMENT TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION GRANTS COMPETITION (Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-SG-2007-2000772 .

Depending on 2007 appropriations and the quality of proposals received, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expect to make available up to about \$1 million in funds in FY 2007 for four-year cooperative agreements to create and operate ballast water research, development, testing and evaluation (RDTE) facilities. We anticipate making 1 or 2 awards in FY2007. Depending on funding available in future years, a total of up to \$1,250,000 is anticipated to be awarded over the four years

of the cooperative agreement. Awards will likely range from \$50,000 to \$1,250,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

The Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program supports projects to develop, test, and demonstrate technologies that treat ships' ballast water in order to reduce the threat of introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water. As part of this Program, we are requesting applications for four-year cooperative agreements to establish facilities for research, development, testing and evaluation (RTDE) of ballast water treatment technology.

The purpose of the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program is to foster the development of technologies that (1) are effective at removing, inactivating, or preventing the transfer of aquatic organisms in the ballast tanks of ships, including in the ballast water or associated sediments; (2) are practicable from the standpoint of ship operations, safety, and environmental protection; (3) have the ability to meet all applicable regulatory requirements; and (4) have the potential to be a commercially viable product.

The Program has funded, and continues to fund, grants for one- and two-year ballast water treatment technology demonstration projects. The purpose of the RTDE facility cooperative agreements announced in this FFO is to further support the ballast water technology development effort by improving:

- Long-term continuity in projects;
- Use of consensus standard test protocols where appropriate, and use of standard ballast water methods and protocols that have regulatory or legal significance where appropriate, so that experimental results will be comparable with experiments conducted by other investigators, and with regulatory and legal requirements, to the extent practicable;
- Standardization and quality control in experiments;
- Independence between treatment technology vendors and investigators evaluating their technologies;
- Engagement of ship and port interests, including at the local and regional level;

- Ease of access to necessary physical infrastructure that might not be otherwise available for ballast water experimentation and demonstration, especially for experiments at greater than laboratory scale; and

- Coordination of regional participation in the development and use of consensus standard ballast water test methods and protocols.

We recognize that treatment technology development spans several stages, from proof of concept experiments to full scale performance verifications. Proposed RDTE facilities may cover any of these stages, or cover multiple stages.

Proposed facilities will need to demonstrate that they have (1) appropriate physical and organizational infrastructure to accomplish their purpose; (2) access to appropriate expertise in multiple disciplines; (3) ability to provide fair and unbiased decisions and advice concerning what technologies will be addressed and what activities will be undertaken; (4) active support of state regulatory and maritime private sector interests; (5) adequate quality control and accountability procedures; and (6) the financial ability to maintain the facility even in the event that NOAA funding is less than expected or unavailable after 2007.

Proposed facilities must also contain an outreach component that will (1) reach out to technology developers to promote awareness of the RTDE facility, (2) promote cooperation among all stakeholders in the region, and (3) distribute information generated by the RTDE facility to appropriate parties.

B. Program Priorities

The overall goal of the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program is to develop and demonstrate ballast water treatment technologies that may ultimately be effectively used in a real world commercial maritime setting. The Program's priorities include supporting projects that achieve the objectives of the Program that score well in all the evaluation factors described below.

The Program will consider the following Program priorities when awarding funding:

1. **National integration**: Because the problems associated with invasive species from ballast water may occur wherever there is maritime commerce, the Program places a strong emphasis on the importance of an integrated, national network to deal with this problem. A successful proposal will demonstrate a clear commitment to leadership in and contribution to the national ballast water technology development effort, including development and use of consensus standards for research, development, testing and evaluation of ballast water treatment technologies. It will also show how the

applicant would work with other ballast water researchers and RDTE facilities, and with the federal government within the cooperative agreement framework, to further the national ballast water technology effort.

2. **Local involvement**: While the ballast water issue is national in scope, the ecological and economic impacts of invasive species and environmental management techniques are felt at the local and regional scales. A successful proposal will therefore demonstrate involvement of the local community and stakeholders, including both public and private sectors.

3. **Geographical Considerations**: The aim of the BWTDP program is to fund facilities that address the broad spectrum of environmental conditions (including water quality) that affect ballast water treatment. A successful proposal will therefore demonstrate how the geographical location of the facility contributes to the spectrum of environmental conditions addressed.

4. **Freedom of apparent conflict of interest**: The aim of the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program is to serve the public interest by encouraging development of effective, commercially viable ballast water treatment technology. Proposals funded through this competition are also expected to serve the interests of the public, and must therefore demonstrate sufficient freedom from financial or other interest in any particular technology that might lead to the appearance of conflict of interest when selecting or conducting projects at the RDTE facility.

II. Award Information

A. Funding

Depending on FY2007 appropriations and quality of proposals, NOAA and FWS expect to make available up to about \$1M in 2007 funds for four-year cooperative agreements to create and operate ballast water RDTE facilities. Depending on future year appropriations and satisfactory execution of the terms of the cooperative agreement, NOAA and FWS also anticipate funding noncompetitively in the subsequent three years, for a total award of up to \$1,250,000. We anticipate making 1 or 2 awards in FY2007. Depending on funding available in future years, a total of up to \$1,250,000 is anticipated to be awarded over the four years of the cooperative agreement. Awards will likely range from \$50,000 to \$1,250,000.

B. Project/Award Period

Start date for the RDTE facility cooperative agreements should be no earlier than June 1, 2007. It is anticipated that funding for the cooperative agreement may be available for up to four years, but the cooperative agreement may outline planned work for up to five years.

All funds received from NOAA are to be spent within two years of the date they are awarded.

C. Funding Instrument

RDTE facility awards will be made by cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement includes substantial involvement by the granting agency. In this case, the substantial involvement will include (a) agency collaboration and participation to ensure that the facility management processes, in particular project selection and operation protocols, are designed to meet the program objectives and priorities laid out in section I (Funding Opportunity Description), (b) agency power to halt an activity if performance specifications are not met, and (c) potential agency review and approval of one stage before work can begin on a subsequent stage.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, Federal, State, local and Indian tribal governments, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations. Applications from non-Federal and eligible Federal applicants (including NOAA employees) will be evaluated in the same selection process. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

Only those who submit preliminary proposals by the preliminary proposal deadline are eligible to submit final proposals.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Applications for RDTE facility cooperative agreements must include additional non-federal matching funds equal to at least 20% of the total NOAA funds requested over the duration of the cooperative agreement. In-kind contributions are eligible to satisfy the match requirement. Matching funds for each individual year need not equal a 20% match of that year's request, as long as the total matching funds for the duration of the cooperative agreement meet the 20% match requirements for the total request amount.

C. Other

Proposals must meet the statutory requirements of Ballast Water Management Demonstration Program projects as codified in Title 16, United States Code, section 4714, including the requirement that

installation and construction of the technologies and practices used in the demonstration program must be performed in the United States.

Certain actions, such as discharge of water containing materials defined as pollutants by authorized regulatory agencies, or discharge of un-exchanged ballast water from beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone into the Great Lakes, may require regulatory approval. A proposal that requires such approval in order to carry out its work plan may be considered ineligible for funding if (a) the applicant does not request approval from the appropriate regulatory body, (b) the regulatory body denies the request, or (c) the regulatory body has not decided whether to grant the request at the time funding decisions under this program are made.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to request Application Package

Applications are available through grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access, materials may also be requested from the Agency Contacts listed in section VII.

B. Notes on Grants.gov submissions

Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks, involving multiple steps, including: 1) registration with the Central Contract Registry, 2) acquisition of a DUNS number, and 3) confirmation of registration with grants.gov. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal.

More detailed instructions on submitting through grants.gov can be found at the grants.gov homepage, and a document on "Suggestions for Electronic Submission" is available on the National Sea Grant College Program "National Funding Opportunities" website. To access this site, go to the NSGO site (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.go>) and click on the "View Requests for Proposals" button.

C. Content and Form of the Application Submission.

1. General Requirements. Proposals are expected to have:

A well defined administrative structure (including a clear proposal of the relationship between the applicant and the federal government under a cooperative agreement), infrastructure including access to physical capital necessary to establish a ballast water RDTE facility, and partners with sufficient scientific and managerial expertise to perform the outlined tasks.

Applicants are encouraged to consult the individuals listed in Agency Contacts, for information that may be useful in preparation of a proposal. Applicants may also consult the documents and other materials available at <http://www.oarhq.noaa.gov/ballast> .

2. Format Requirements. Narrative attachments to an electronic application should be composed in Portable Document Format (PDF) or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all formatting requirements.

All pages must be single- or double-spaced, printed or typed in at least a 10-point font, and printable on metric A4 (210 mm x 297 mm) or 8.5" x 11" paper.

Appendix B, if provided, is exempt from this formatting requirement. Appendix B must be provided in hardcopy (twelve copies).

All information needed for review of the proposal should be included in the main text, except for material included in the appendices, as described in the content requirements section below.

3. Preliminary Proposal Requirements. Preliminary proposals are required for RDTE facility cooperative agreement proposals. These preliminary proposals will not be subjected to a selection process: all those (and only those) who submit preliminary proposals meeting the deadline and other submission requirements are eligible to submit final proposals.

Preliminary proposals will be used to provide feedback to applicants, select appropriate technical reviewers for final proposals, and to tailor technical, formatting and content guidance to assist applicants in writing of final proposals.

Preliminary proposals have the same format and content requirements as final proposals. As preliminary proposals are not evaluated or scored but only reviewed and commented on, applicants are encouraged to highlight areas where they would especially appreciate feedback to improve their final proposal.

Because one goal of this Program is to foster regional and national coordination of ballast water efforts, submitters of preliminary proposals may be encouraged to work with other preliminary proposal applicants in the same region to produce a single coordinated final proposal.

4. Final Proposal Content Requirements: The following information must be included:

a. Signed Title Page: The title page should provide a title for the Cooperative Agreement, identify the Principal Investigator (Director of Project) and Partner(s), and provide their name(s),

respective affiliations, complete addresses, telephone, FAX, and e-mail information. The title page should be signed by the Authorized Representative, and should list the total amount of Federal funds being requested through this Funding Opportunity.

b. Project Summary (2 page maximum): It is critical that the project summary accurately describe the project being proposed. This summary should provide the following information:

(1) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application. The title should begin with the words "RDTE facility", include a brief descriptive project title, and end with a hyphen, followed by the first initial and last name of the Principal Investigator or Project Director.

(2) Investigators: List the names of all partners in the project, and a Point of Contact for each entity. Start with the Principal Investigator / Project Director.

(3) Funding: Report the funding request. Report total amount of matching funds (of both currency and the dollar equivalent of in-kind services and capital), for each year of the proposed cooperative agreement.

(4) Project start date and milestone timeline.

(5) Project objectives: Provide a brief statement outlining the goals for the RDTE site, and the administrative and operational plans for the site development.

c. Project Description (100 page limit):

(1) Introduction/Background/Justification: Applicants should assume that reviewers are familiar with the issue of aquatic invasive species related to ballast water and understand the importance of addressing this concern. However, the applicant may wish to include in this section any regionally specific considerations and justification for the proposed partnerships, design and location of the proposed RDTE facility.

(2) Objectives to be achieved: Describe the goals and objectives of the facility and how the proposed structure and operation will achieve these goals;

(3) Work plan: Discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved, and provide a detailed outline of necessary steps and projected timeline. This work plan should include the following elements:

(i) Management Plan: Organizational structure and roles of participants in the application. Include procedures for selecting an advisory board, formal relationships with

applicable regulatory agencies, other ballast water RDTE facilities, and other groups. Describe the role of the proposed facility within the national ballast water technology development effort, and the proposed role of the federal government within the cooperative agreement framework;

(ii) Business Plan: Plan to assure that all funding committed to the project, including requested Federal funds, proposed matching funds and any additional external funding, is used for its intended purpose, is managed to maximize the effectiveness of the facility, and is accurately reported to the NOAA. In this section describe the plan for dealing with a reduction or cessation of funding from NOAA during the duration of the cooperative agreement. If any income is planned to be generated by the facility, describe the purpose to which those funds will be put, and the plan to assure that they are put to that purpose;

(iii) Set Up Plan: Plan and milestones for design and construction of the RDTE facility, including a site plan and rationale;

(iv) O&M Plan: Operation and maintenance (O&M) plan for the facility, including the plan for maintaining the physical infrastructure, safety, environmental compliance, and compliance with the Research Protocol to prevent invasive species release by facility activities. It would be helpful to include specific examples of how various situations that might arise during operation of the facility will be handled, for example: the use of biocides or other harmful or active substances; the test and evaluation of a large multi-component technology system; the acquisition, maintenance, use and disposal of target organisms.

(v) Research Plan: Research plan for the facility, including specific details in regards to the experimental design of testing and evaluation protocols, and technical details in regards to how these experiments will be carried out. This section should also include an AIS Prevention Protocol that describes the project selection and oversight protocols which will ensure that potentially damaging organisms will not be released to the environment in a viable state;

(vi) Project Selection Plan: Process for soliciting, evaluating, selecting and funding projects for research, development, test and evaluation, including plan for ensuring that the process is fair, open, competitive, based on merit and relevance to local and national needs, free from real or perceived conflict of interest, and open to the public to the maximum practical extent;

(vii) Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan: Plan to assure that testing and evaluation performed at the facility produces

results that are scientifically valid, unbiased, and free from real or perceived conflict of interest;

(viii) Output Reporting Plan: This plan should provide a timeline for submission of reports on progress toward meeting work plan milestones. Measurable outputs of progress and associated milestones with specific due dates should be included;

(ix) Outreach Plan: Plan to ensure that technology developers are aware of the facility and understand the process to make use of the facility, and that stakeholders work together to the maximum extent practicable;

(x) Review and Documentation Plan: Plan to ensure results receive appropriate peer review and are appropriately documented (including ensuring that results classified as Influential Scientific Information are peer reviewed and documented as detailed in Office of Management and Budget Bulletin on Peer Review and Information Quality), and that results are available to appropriate communities (federal and local governments, academia, the shipping industry, etc.);

(xi) Continuation Plan: Plan describing the planned fate of the RDTE facility at the end of the cooperative agreement period, or earlier in the event that NOAA funding is less than expected or unavailable after 2007. Include whether the facility is expected to continue in the same role under other sponsorship, transition to other uses, or be decommissioned;

(xii) Environmental Compliance Plan: Plan describing how all requirements for environmental compliance of the facility will be met while it is operating and when it is decommissioned. Include a discussion of NEPA analysis, Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation, and any other requirements necessary for federal support of the facility;

(4) Personnel Plan

(i) Staffing Plan: Provide a description of the key positions within the proposed program, including detailed explanations of the skills and experience that will be required to effectively fill these positions (essentially position descriptions). This information can be provided in a separate Staffing Plan section, or incorporated into the individual Work Plan components. Key positions should include program manager, facility manager, biologists (including overall lead positions and topic area experts), engineers (including lead positions and topic area experts), quality assurance/quality control managers, and finance managers. Qualified engineering staff will be extremely important in the design, construction, and operation of the facility. While civil engineers with experience in plant operations will be important, even more so will be engineers with

demonstrated capabilities in test and evaluation of environmental engineering technologies, particularly for water treatment, at large scales in real or simulated maritime settings. Biologists will be needed with demonstrated abilities in evaluating the effects of anthropogenic factors on a wide array of organisms, and with an appreciation for the many opportunities for confounding factors to arise when utilizing and evaluating organisms experimentally in an engineered environment. Other key positions for program and financial management should also be carefully described.

(ii) Resumes: 5 page maximum for project area leads, 2 page maximum all others.) Clearly document the track record of individuals in section 4i at successfully managing programs of similar scale and complexity. For positions that are not filled and identified to specific people at the time of the application, provide a well described plan for how the program will identify and obtain the services of individuals who can meet the position descriptions outlined above.

(5) Impacts: Describe in objective terms how and when meeting the objectives of this project will impact the Nation's ability to use effective ballast water treatment technologies. Describe what else must happen, in addition to meeting the stated objectives of this project, for these impacts to be realized.

(6) Coordination with other Program Elements: Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal.

(7) Contribution of other Resources: Describe the other resources, from either federal or non-federal sources, that will be used by this project, and that will satisfy the requirement for matching funds. The monetary value of in-kind physical capital and services may be used in this assessment.

d. Literature Cited

e. Budget and Budget Justification: Although cooperative agreements will be funded for up to four years, project activities may extend for up to five years. There should be a separate budget for each year of the project, as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire project. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4, but may use their own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. Subcontracts should have a separate budget page. Indicate matching funds. The total matching funds reported must be at least 20% of the total funding requested, and may be spread throughout the duration of the cooperative agreement. Provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

f. Appendices: The following appendices may be included with this submission. These appendices should be organized as outlined below.

(i) Appendix A may include only the following: (a) correspondence from permitting agencies indicating satisfactory progress in receiving required permits or approvals, (b) letters of support, (c) legal documents establishing official relationships between partners.

(ii) Appendix B may include tables or visual information that do not meet the formatting requirements of section c. Examples may include engineering documents, charts, maps or other materials that require alternative paper size. Anything included in this section MUST be cited in the Project Description (section c) or Budget (section e). If an Appendix B is provided, it must be submitted in paper hardcopy, and the electronic application package must include a Table of Contents for Appendix B.

(iii) Appendix C may include 4) published results of past work, whether funded by NOAA or not, 5) progress and final reports submitted to NOAA or other funding entity.

All information in the Appendices will be made available to the technical panel, but is not guaranteed to be reviewed.

g. Standard Application Forms: The standard application package received from grants.gov or from the contacts listed in section VII must be used..

D. Submission Dates and Times

1. Submission Dates

Preliminary proposals must be received by the National Sea Grant Office by 5 p.m. EDT on Thursday, September 14, 2006. Final proposals must be received by 5 p.m. EST on Tuesday, December 19, 2007. Submissions through grants.gov will have a date and time indicator on them. Hard copies will be date and time stamped upon receipt. Applications which are not received by the deadline will not be reviewed.

2. Exceptions

Hard copy applications arriving after the above deadlines will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time and as long as the applications are received by the NSGO no later than 5 p.m three business days following the closing date.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

F. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Preliminary and Full Proposals must be submitted through grants.gov. Any application that includes an appendix B (oversize documents) must submit appendix B in hardcopy to: Mrs. Geri Taylor, National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Ballast Water Competition, Room 11841, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2435. To assure that the appendix is matched to the correct electronic application, the hardcopy must be accompanied by a signed cover letter identifying the title, submitting organization, and person to be contacted on matters involving the application. Information provided in the cover letter must match that provided in the Form 424 submitted electronically through grants.gov as part of the application package. Since NOAA can not reproduce oversize or other special materials, if these documents will lose content if reproduced in black and white on standard 8 ½ x 11 inch paper, the applicant is encouraged to send twelve copies to ensure reviewers have access to complete information.

Applicants without internet access may submit hard copies (one UNBOUND original and one copy, except for appendix B which needs twelve copies) to: Mrs. Geri Taylor, National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Ballast Water Competition, Room 11841, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2435. Include a cover letter stating that you are submitting in hardcopy because you do not have internet access.

Facsimile and electronic mail transmissions of proposals will not be accepted for either Preliminary or Full Proposals.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the Program goals: (35 percent). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. This assessment will evaluate how well the objectives of the facility meet NOAA and Program objectives. This section will consider the adequacy of the proposed

project work plan to achieve these objectives.

2. Technical/scientific merit: (35 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. This assessment will evaluate whether the proposed program structure and operations/management/staffing plan is technically sound and feasible, if the methods, including QA/QC procedures, are appropriate, and the degree to which there are clear project goals and objectives that address the goals of NOAA.

3. Overall qualification of applicants (10 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This assessment will evaluate how qualified the members of the proposed partnership are to carry out their proposed roles.

4. Project costs (10 percent): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. This assessment will evaluate the adequacy of the work plan to achieve the proposed objectives, and the degree to which the proposal will maximize return on federal investment.

5. Outreach and education (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This assessment will evaluate the degree to which the results from the facility are distributed to the appropriate stakeholders, including the federal government, local stakeholder, and private industry interests.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted at both the preliminary and final proposal stages to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

Preliminary proposals will not be subjected to a selection process. Preliminary proposals will be used to provide feedback to applicants, select appropriate technical reviewers for final proposals, and to tailor technical, formatting and content guidance that will be supplied to applicants who submitted preliminary proposals, to assist them in writing the full proposal. All those (and only those) who submitted preliminary proposals meeting the deadline and other requirement of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

Full proposals will be sent to peer reviewers for written reviews. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate the proposals using the evaluation criteria listed in this announcement. A peer review panel

consisting of government, academic, and industry representatives will evaluate each final proposal and accompanying written reviews in accordance with the above criteria and their assigned weights. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each proposal, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The review panel will provide no consensus advice to the Program Officer.

The Program Officer will consider these evaluations when recommending to the Selecting Official which applications should be selected for award.

C. Selection Factors

The selecting official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with / Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Selection Factor 5 includes the applicant's prior performance at reporting of results.

Applicants may be asked to respond to questions or modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Suggested modifications may include consolidation of preliminary proposals from multiple applicants into a single coordinated final proposal. Subsequent grant administration procedures will be in accordance with current agency grants procedures. A summary statement of the technical evaluation by the peer panel will be provided to each applicant.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, awards for successful applications are expected to be made by June 1, 2007. The start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) should be no earlier than this date.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award made by NOAA is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided electronically or by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

2. Limitations of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regis/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals,

introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

Financial reports are to be submitted to the Federal Grants Officer and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer. Program and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Program reports should include progress on identified milestones. Reports may be required to be submitted electronically or by postal mail. If they are submitted by postal mail, all financial and progress reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies).

VII. Agency Contacts

Dorn Carlson, the National Sea Grant Office, NOAA, 301-713-2435, or Pamela Thibodeaux, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 703-358-2493. Agency contacts may be reached via email at ballast.water@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

A. In addition to producing an annual progress report and a final report, successful applicants will be expected to participate in, and present a report at, an annual ballast water investigators meeting in the continental United States during each year that the project is ongoing. Applicants should consider travel costs to these meetings when preparing their budgets.

B. All Department of the Interior assistance awards are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Part 12, Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs.